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ANNUAL REPORT



OF

THE ALBERTA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

FOR THE PERIOD OF
JANUARY 1, 1974, TO MARCH 31, 1975

Alberta

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

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THE ALBERTA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Max Wyman (Edmonton)	Chairman
Vincent L. Dineen (Calgary)	Commissioner
Muriel A. Woods (Edmonton)	Commissioner
John G. Fournier (Edmonton)	Commissioner
Harvie Fox (Edmonton)	Commissioner
Donald Ostry (Calgary)	Commissioner

THE ALBERTA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

ANNUAL REPORT

FOR THE PERIOD

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It is recognized in Alberta as a fundamental principle, and as a matter of public policy, that all persons are equal in dignity and rights without regard to race, religion, ethnicity, colour, age, sex, ancestry or place of origin.

From the preamble to
The Individual's Rights
Protection Act.



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THE ALBERTA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

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Jean B. Forest (Edmonton)	Commissioner
Marvin Fox (Standoff)	Commissioner
Connie Osterman (Carstairs)	Commissioner
Nomi S. Whalen (Calgary)	Commissioner

... it is recognized in Alberta as a fundamental principle, and as a matter of public policy, that all persons are equal in dignity and rights without regard to race, religious beliefs, colour, sex, age, ancestry or place of origin ...

- from the preamble to
The Individual's Rights
Protection Act.

PERMANENT STAFF OF
THE ALBERTA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

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Barbara Stanford	Clerk Stenographer

EDUCATION WING

Dorothy A. Richardson	Assistant Director (Education and Research)
Jennifer Bowerman	Education Officer
Roger Cardinal	Education Officer
Julie Anne Le Gras	Education Officer
Ann McLeod	Clerk Stenographer

FIELD SERVICES WING

Peter J. Cresswell	Assistant Director (Field Services)
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Lydia Emanuel	Human Rights Officer
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Catherine Woods	Clerk Stenographer

SOUTHERN REGION OFFICE

Arthur Bear Chief

Human Rights Officer

Reginald Newkirk

Human Rights Officer

Barbara Cook

Clerk Stenographer

Lily Fong

Clerk Stenographer

Human Rights Officer	Arthur Bear Chief
Human Rights Officer	Reginald Newkirk
Clerk Stenographer	Barbara Cook
Clerk Stenographer	Jilly Ford

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THE ALBERTA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

ANNUAL REPORT 1974

INTRODUCTION

Since members of the Alberta Human Rights Commission were first appointed during October of 1973, the year 1974 marks the first full year of operating during which members of the Commission could carry out the duties and functions required of them by The Individual's Rights Protection Act. It was a year that contained some success, some failure, and some frustration.

The operational policies of the Alberta Human Rights Commission differ significantly from the corresponding operational policies of similar commissions appointed by the other provinces of Canada. In most other provinces a human rights commission is a policy-making body, and it takes no active part in the enforcement of legislation. While the Alberta Human Rights Commission is a policy-making body, its members also play an active role in the enforcement of The Individual's Rights Protection Act. In the first instance, all complaints are processed by the permanent members of the staff of the Alberta Human Rights Commission, and hundreds of complaints are brought to a satisfactory conclusion by that staff.

When a member of the permanent staff becomes convinced that a settlement of a complaint cannot be achieved at that stage, the member of staff will report to the Commission the nature of the complaint, recommendations for settlement, and the difficulties he or she has had in attempting to bring about a settlement. Normally, two or more members of the Commission will then investigate the complaint, including interviews with both adversaries. In some instances, members of the Commission have successfully resolved some complaints, and in others they too have had to report to the Commission the existence of an impasse blocking a settlement. In these latter instances, the Commission must decide whether to invoke the procedures for enforcement provided by The Individual's Rights Protection Act.

If one reads the enforcement section of The Individual's Rights Protection Act, it becomes obvious that the settlement of complaints is the major objective of this part of the Act. Indeed, at every distinct phase of the formal enforcement procedure a cooling-off period, during which the Commission has a duty to try to effect settlement, is provided. There is no question that the direct involvement of members of the Commission in actual cases has increased the number of cases that have been brought to a conclusion

satisfactory to both adversaries, and to the Commission. Although this is a benefit that accrues from the Alberta policy, it is by no means the major benefit of that policy. It is not an idle boast to say that members of the Alberta Human Rights Commission received, during the reporting period, an education in the area of human rights that exceeds the corresponding education obtained by any other similar group in Canada. Going out into the field and dealing with concrete issues on a face to face basis with adversaries gives a perspective about problems involving human rights that is far different from the corresponding perspective of people who deal with such matters from the sanctuary of a conference table. By going out into the field, members of the Commission have learned that other people have differing views of discrimination, and in some instances these people have convinced us of the validity of their point of view. In other instances, it has been found that parts of The Individual's Rights Protection Act are unenforceable, and this makes us question whether those parts should remain in that Act. In still other instances, situations have been found involving inhumane discrimination, and yet the Commission is powerless to act because of lack of jurisdiction.

Some frustrating examples of situations involving

violations of human rights over which the Commission has no jurisdiction are listed below.

(a) In Alberta, for the purpose of the criminal law, a male becomes an adult at the age of 16 while a female does not do so until the age of 18. Such a differential can and does lead to serious discriminatory practices between males and females, many of which are condoned by law.

(b) The treatment of the wife involved in the Murdoch case, again a decision based in law.

(c) The violation of the rights of privacy in the use of "writs of assistance", a recognized legal procedure in Canada.

(d) The sex discrimination involved in the payment of different pensions to some male and female teachers who retired some years ago.

(e) The age discrimination allowed in employment practices involving people who have not yet reached the age of 45.

(f) The lack of protection in The Individual's Rights Protection Act for handicapped people.

Each of the matters listed above, and indeed others,

has received some study by the Commission. Although in most instances, the concern of the Commission was voiced to the appropriate federal or provincial government agency, only in (d) did the action of the Commission result in a satisfactory solution being found. Since these are matters over which the Commission has no jurisdiction, it might be argued that such matters should not be the concern of the Commission. This is an argument the Commission rejects. Indeed, the Commission is preparing, for the consideration of the Alberta Government, a major revision of The Individual's Rights Protection Act. If the intent of this revision is adopted, then some people, not now protected, will receive needed protection under that Act.

From the remoteness of a board room, it is easy to dream of what should be, and blame the public for translating those dreams into the nightmares of reality. It is quite a different thing to go out and face the nightmares of reality, and to make a positive effort towards a partial realization of the dreams of what should be. In Alberta, the members of the Alberta Human Rights Commission have opted for the latter policy, a policy that is costly to the government in terms of money, and is costly to the members of the Commission in terms of time and effort. Both costs, in our opinion, are worth the while.

For at least 20 years, federal and provincial acts have contained laws forbidding the discriminatory practices of some employers. In spite of known illegal discrimination, these acts have resulted in few, if any, prosecutions. In Alberta, The Individual's Rights Protection Act seems to have had more success in persuading employers to obey the provisions of the Act, and aiding in the prosecution of those who won't. During the reporting period the Commission was able to persuade many of the Alberta hospitals that the work of nursing orderlies (all men) did not differ in any essential feature from the corresponding work of nursing aides (all women). There had existed a significant differential in pay between these groups for many many years. The Alberta Human Rights Commission is pleased to report that some of the hospitals in this province have adopted a new salary policy in which the salary schedules of nursing orderlies and nursing aides are now the same. Although conceding the principle involved, other hospitals have not at this date rectified this unacceptable situation. Since this situation has important implications for the future, we shall outline some of the issues involved.

Since every person, belonging to the same class of employees, can lodge an individual complaint with the

Commission, it is possible to have the same issue adjudicated over and over again, with predictable results. In the particular case involving the nursing aides and the hospitals of Alberta, the costs might well run unnecessarily into the hundreds of thousands of dollars. In such instances, the Commission believes that an appropriate body should have the power to declare a certain action to be a class action involving all members of a particular group, not just those who register complaints with the Commission. Further, when a final decision is obtained, that decision should be binding on all members of the group, and all the different employers who employ members of that group.

Most cases involving allegations of sex discrimination in the payment of different salaries to men and women involve two issues.

- (1) Is the work done by the two groups substantially similar?
- (2) If so, how much back-pay is the group discriminated against entitled to receive?

The experience the Commission has had supports the belief that some employers, who are willing to concede the fundamental issue involved in (1), will not do so because

of the money involved in (2). Even though they may be willing to concede the major issue involved, some employers, because of financial consideration, will fight the allegation with every legal weapon they can muster, a fight that may take years to resolve. Indeed, the question of back-pay may prove to be a major stumbling block that might impede the elimination of discrimination in the future. This question should now be reconsidered in the light of some of the cases that have reached court levels for adjudication.

After court decisions are reached, the Commission studies the implications of the many issues that are raised in such cases. Normally the Commission releases the results of its studies in the form of briefs. Some of these have already been written, and others are being prepared. As an example, the Commission has written a brief on matrimonial and property rights, a brief that has been sent to the Alberta Institute for Law Research and Reform. Many of the Commission recommendations have been incorporated in the latest draft of the proposals of that Institute.

In our opinion, the major contribution to society which a commission can make is the elimination of undesirable discrimination. Its principal tools should be conciliation

and education. Its principal objective should be the elimination of discrimination on a "from this day forward basis". The possibility of redress for past discrimination is an issue that should be discussed independently of the principal objective of a commission. It is by no means clear to us whether the possibility of redress will enhance or detract from the possibility of eliminating discrimination in the future. The huge costs involved in an attempt to rectify the past may well encourage employers to fight the principles involved in the courts, and a serious delay in the implementation of desired principles may well result. The whole issue of back-pay should be considered again, and these considerations might well lead to a desirable change in The Individual's Rights Protection Act.

Although court cases bring some of the activities of the Commission to the attention of the public, the bulk of our work still ends by settlement. For this reason, most of our work escapes public notice. During the reporting period, the Commission succeeded in providing job opportunities for women in occupations that had been traditionally denied to them, or offered to them on a restricted basis. Although women have been accepted into the police forces for some years, restrictions on the nature of their work and pay differentials are just beginning to disappear. Women are now

successfully employed as bus drivers, truck drivers, and in a host of other so-called heavy work situations that by tradition used to be considered to demand the strength of a man. With regret, the Commission must report that the acceptance of women among the urban firefighters of Alberta remains something to be accomplished in the future. In this regard, it is interesting to note the paternalistic attitude that is still retained by many men in Alberta. Many of them still feel uncomfortable if they remain seated in a bus when standing women are present. This discomfort often gives way to dismay when they are forced to watch women lift heavy objects, and do some of the dirtier jobs required by the society in which we live. This attitude must change if the principles of "equal opportunity for work for all people and equal pay for the same work" are to become accepted principles in our society.

In importance, our failures probably outweigh our successes. The Commission notes that society has had little success in making substantive headway in the elimination of deep-rooted acts of discrimination being perpetrated on the native people of Alberta. We are concerned that the November 1974 data for the Fort Saskatchewan Correctional Institute show that for some offences, 100% of the new inmates are natives. Data such as these make it reasonable

to believe that the effects of some of our criminal laws show serious discrimination against these people. Of even greater concern is the following statement contained in a background paper prepared for the Law Reform Commission of Canada:

"The percentages of native offenders in jail and the reasons for committal are shocking statistics and yet the general public has not indicated a great concern.

This seems paradoxical in a period of emphasis on fundamental and minority rights and on social justice, but part of the explanation seems to be public unawareness of the dimensions of the problem."

The Alberta Human Rights Commission has not yet been able to make the native community sufficiently aware of the existence of the Commission, of the service that the Commission might render to its individual members, and to establish the mutual trust that must come into being before the first significant steps toward success can be taken. Possibly because the Indian Act places Indian reserves under Federal jurisdiction, native people are not aware that The

Individual's Rights Protection Act applies to them just as it applies to all other residents of Alberta. It would only be a pious hope on our part to say that 1975 will be a better year. The Commission is still unsure of a way to solve this vexing and deep-rooted problem. In spite of a seeming pessimism, the Commission intends to continue to study this problem.

It is a frustrating experience to administer an Act that provides only one sanction to govern all acts of discrimination ranging from the trivial to the serious. The Commission does not believe that it was created to adjudicate matters of sex discrimination involving employers who require short hair for male employees but make no similar requirement for female employees. We believe such practices to be forbidden by The Individual's Rights Protection Act, and indeed many of them are settled by our permanent staff, but some remain unsettled. The Commission is loathe to send such a trivial matter to a board of inquiry. There must be a better way to handle matters of this type. The Commission does not believe that it was created to root out every "waitress wanted" sign that can be found among the cafes of Alberta. Again this is a forbidden practice, but surely a board of inquiry is not an appropriate tool to deal with a relatively small matter of this kind.

Our frustration however takes on an entirely different magnitude when we learn of acts of inhumanity which lie beyond our jurisdiction, and beyond our resources to rectify. In Alberta, there is some reason to believe that over 80% of the offences defined by the Highway Traffic Act, Liquor Control Act, Alcohol Drug and Narcotic Control Act that lead to imprisonment are the result of a default of payment, rather than a direct sentence to imprisonment for the offence. Although the statement of these laws is beyond reproach, the effect of those laws is a serious act of discrimination against the poor and the poverty stricken members of our province. Maybe it is wise to have such matters dealt with by other agencies, but it remains a frustrating experience to witness such discriminatory effects, and to remain powerless to act.

Our attention has been called to the unprotected position of people who suffer from physical or mental handicaps of one kind or another. This situation, involving a group who need protection, yields another example of discrimination that has not been placed under the jurisdiction of The Individual's Rights Protection Act.

If this province is to alleviate the extreme stress placed on the poor, the ignorant, the handicapped, and other disadvantaged groups, it may well be that our government will

have to embark on major affirmative action programs, programs that will willingly and knowingly discriminate in favor of these groups. Since no other course of action is likely to alleviate such suffering, the people of Alberta should normally deem affirmative action programs to be programs involving acceptable discrimination.

During the reporting period, the Alberta Human Rights Commission has had enough success to make us want more. We have had enough failure to make us want to do better. We have had enough frustration to make us want to seriously re-think the whole area of human rights legislation.

COMPLAINT DATA

For this one annual report, data concerning complaints cover a fifteen month period beginning January 1, 1974 and ending March 31, 1975. Annual reports in the future will cover the twelve month period beginning April 1 of one year and ending March 31 of the following year. In this way, the reporting year of the Commission will coincide with the fiscal year of the government. The activities of the Commission will then bear a closer relationship to the annual budget provided for the support of those activities.

During the period mentioned above, over 2,500 people contacted the staff of the Commission about matters that they, the people, believed to be related to human rights. After a very preliminary type of enquiry or investigation, it became clear that about 1,700 did not come under the jurisdiction of The Individual's Rights Protection Act, nor were they problems with which the staff of the Commission could give a great deal of guidance or help. In every instance, however, our staff made the effort to find, if possible, the proper government agency that had the jurisdiction to cope with the many problems that were brought, in the first instance, to the attention of the Alberta Human Rights Commission.

Even for the remaining 838 cases, 307 were clearly not subject to the jurisdiction of The Individual's Rights Protection Act. Nevertheless, these cases were closely related to the work of the Commission. For example, a number of these cases involved discrimination because of marital status. Others involved discrimination because of physical or mental handicaps. Although neither of these forms of discrimination fall within the jurisdiction of the Commission, members of our staff made the effort to bring the adversaries together and to effect a settlement. In other instances, the Commission attempted to find remedies for injustices of

this kind. Of the 307 cases of this type, all but 25 were brought to a satisfactory settlement.

Of the vast number of original contacts, only 531 involved issues that were clearly within the legal jurisdiction of the Commission. About 1/3 of these complaints involved discrimination because of sex, particularly in the area of equal pay for equal work. It is in this area that the Commission has made substantial progress, and settlements involving the payment of one or more thousands of dollars were made. More important, some respondent employers have voluntarily agreed to stop such discriminatory practices.

In all of the 531 cases mentioned above, there exists the distinct possibility that respondents were breaking the law. For this reason many respondents obtained legal advice, and in some instances were represented by lawyers throughout the investigation. This is of course their right, and no criticism is intended. Nevertheless, this type of complaint proceeds slowly and often settlements take two or more months to obtain. When settlements are not obtained, the enforcement procedure takes much longer to invoke. During the period mentioned above, 287 cases were settled, 20 were withdrawn, and 15 were dismissed. 209 cases are still under active investigation.

This annual report contains a statistical summary of the number and nature of the complaints registered with the Commission. In addition, the permanent staff has prepared for the Commission a detailed summary of each individual complaint. The Commission is willing to make such summaries available to interested people. Although a few examples may be of interest, there are too many of these complaints to report in detail on an individual basis.

1. A woman employed by a public institution in a cleaning capacity was not allowed to fill the position of caretaker since this was regarded as a "male" position. When changes in provincial human rights legislation resulted in her finally achieving this status, no recognition of her previous cleaning experience was allowed for seniority purposes. This resulted in a restriction of available promotion and corresponding pay increase. After months of efforts made by the staff and members of the Commission, the woman had parts of her cleaning experience credited for seniority purposes. The woman is now a chief caretaker in one of the component parts of that institution.

2. A woman, employed by a large commercial corporation, claimed sex discrimination in a promotion that was denied to her. Two members of the Commission were able to obtain a financial settlement. More important, members of the Commission were able to reveal to the administrative officers of the corporation that such discrimination existed in their company, without the knowledge or consent of the administrative officers.
3. The issue of a public school board charging fees for children of Catholic parents wishing to have their children attend schools under the jurisdiction of that board has been fought in courts several times during the past 70 years. In every instance in the past, courts have ruled that such fees are legal. For the first time, a court has ruled that these fees are no longer legal because of the implications of The Individual's Rights Protection Act. As far as we are aware, this decision is being appealed.
4. Certain issues related to pregnancy have come to the attention of the Commission, some of which have been successfully resolved.

EDUCATION FUNCTION OF THE COMMISSION

Section 14(1) of the Individual's Rights Protection Act states:

"It is the function of the Commission

- (a) to forward the principle that every person is equal in dignity and rights without regard to race, religious beliefs, colour, sex, age, ancestry or place of origin,
- (b) to promote an understanding of, acceptance of and compliance with this Act,
- (c) to research, develop and conduct educational programs designed to eliminate discriminatory practices related to race, religious beliefs, colour, sex, age, ancestry or place of origin, and
- (d) to encourage and co-ordinate both public and private human rights programs and activities."

The Government obviously intended that the education function of the Commission play an important role in the activities of the Commission, a role that the staff and members of the Commission have tried to fulfil in a variety of ways. Some of our activities are summarized below:

1. 116 speaking engagements;
2. 13 radio or television appearances;
3. 19 programs describing the work of the Alberta Human Rights Commission;
4. four displays illustrating the work of the Alberta Human Rights Commission;
5. distribution of 43,200 pieces of literature dealing with human rights;
6. the development of material to call to the attention of 27,000 employers the implications of the Individual's Rights Protection Act.

Alberta is not, of course, alone in its desire to fight unacceptable and unnecessary discrimination. Groups such as ours can be found in other provinces, and in other countries. It is the policy of the Commission to communicate and cooperate with as many of these groups as is possible. Such a policy carries with it a commitment to allow members of our staff and members of the Commission to travel, and to participate in seminars, workshops and conferences dealing with topics related to human rights. The Commission had representation at the following seminars, workshops or conferences:

1. Third Annual Meeting of the Canadian Human Rights Commission; (Winnipeg)
2. Annual Meeting of the International Association of Human Rights; (Winnipeg)
3. A conference of the Canadian Association of Human Rights; (Winnipeg)
4. A conference of Human Rights Ministers; (Edmonton)
5. A meeting of Canadian Human Rights Foundations; (Toronto)
6. A conference of Human Rights Ministers; (Halifax)
7. A workshop of the Regional Citizens Advocacy; (Edmonton)
8. A conference on Women and the Law; (Calgary)
9. A conference on Career Counselling for Women and Girls; (Calgary)
10. A conference sponsored by Personnel Agencies; (Edmonton)
11. National Conference of Canadian Anthropologists and Sociologists; (Edmonton)
12. Alberta Teachers' Association; (Calgary)

In addition, staff and Commissioners hold many informal meetings with individuals or groups who are concerned with a broad range of human rights problems. Many of these problems have no legislative solution, and many of these individuals or groups believe that The Individual's Rights Protection Act should be extended to afford protection to many groups not covered by the present Act. In some instances, the Commission will seek to obtain this protection by proposing amendments to The Individual's Rights Protection Act.

During the reporting period, the Commission appointed a person to the position of Education and Research Coordinator. That person is expected to implement the policies of the Commission in the development of a planned educational program designed to fulfil the education functions of the Commission.

CONCLUSION

It is fair to say that members of the Commission are now quite different from what they were when they were first appointed to the Commission. Experience with the real cases of the real world has given us an education that can

be obtained in no other way. Work in the field has made us acutely aware that there is a common view about some forms of discrimination, but there is no such view about all forms of discrimination. Clearly there is a great deal of discussion, research and education needed before the majority of the people of Alberta emerge with one view about all of the forms of discrimination that should become illegal in the Province of Alberta.

Fifteen months of experience with administering The Individual's Rights Protection Act have provided ample evidence that there is an urgent need to make major amendments to that Act. It is the intention of the Commission to propose such amendments to the Government some time during 1976.

COMPLAINTS RELATED TO:

COMPLAINTS IN AREA OF:	RACE — COLOUR					Religion	SEX		Sex and Age	Age	Ancestry	Place of Origin	Marital Status	Other	SUB- TOTALS	TOTALS
	RACE — COLOUR						Female	Male								
	Black	Native	East Indian or Pakistani	Oriental	White											
DISCRIMINATORY SIGNS (2)							6	2							8	10
PUBLIC ACCOM. SERVICES (3)	1	26				9	14	5			1	4	2	8	29	124
TENANCY (4)	11	14				1	1	1			1	1		4	20	48
EQUAL PAY (5)							21	5							21	26
EMPLOYMENT (5)	6	3	5	2	2	4	56	24		10	4	10	3	24	129	174
ADVERTISEMENTS APPLICATIONS (7)		1				1	3	2		5	3	2	4	4	45	37
UNIONS, ETC. (9)							5	8	4	4	3	1	1	4	16	9
RETALIATION (10)	1					1	3				1	3	1		8	1
OTHER						2					1			1	10	10
FORMAL SUB-TOTALS	19	43	5	2	2	13	106	40	4	14	6	18	4	276	163	439
INFORMAL SUB-TOTALS	7	9		3		6	20	3	3	15	8	5	17	67		
TOTALS FORMAL INFORMAL	26	52	5	5	2	19	126	43	7	29	14	23	21	67		439
TOTALS			90			19	169		7	29	37		21	67		439

FORMAL COMPLAINTS
INFORMAL COMPLAINTS

SOUTHERN REGIONAL OFFICE

COMPLAINTS RELATED TO:

FORMAL COMPLAINTS
INFORMAL COMPLAINTS

COMPLAINTS RELATED TO:

COMPLAINTS IN AREA OF:	RACE - COLOUR					Religion	SEX		Sex and Age	Age	Ancestry	Place of Origin	Marital Status	Other	SUB- TOTALS	TOTALS
	Black	Native	East Indian or Pakistani	Oriental	White		Female	Male								
DISCRIMINATORY SIGNS (2)		1					2	1		2				1	4	7
PUBLIC ACCOM. & SERVICES (3)	3	10	2			3	15	3	1			1	1	17	38	89
TENANCY (4)	7	7	2			1	3	2				1	4	3	23	37
EQUAL PAY (5)				1			36			3					36	38
EMPLOYMENT (6)	7	6	2	2		5	44	16		14	3	13	1		113	165
ADVERTISEMENTS APPLICATIONS (7)	2	2				1	11	16				1			29	36
UNIONS, ETC. (9)							5	3	1			1			9	12
RETALIATION (10)				1			2								3	3
OTHER																12
FORMAL SUB-TOTALS	17	23	6	3		10	116	42	1	16	3	17	1		255	399
INFORMAL SUB-TOTALS	5	18		1		10	19	2	3	11	2	7	5		61	144
TOTALS FORMAL INFORMAL	22	41	6	4		20	135	44	4	27	5	24	6	61		399
TOTALS			73			20	179		4	27		29	6	61		399

NORTHERN REGIONAL OFFICE

